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## The Pheasant's Call and the Sound of Sympathy

Matthew Mewhinney

A poem is a pheasant.  
—Wallace Stevens, “Adagia”<sup>1</sup>

It is not every day that the world arranges itself in a pheasant.  
—Jeremy Over, “A Poem is a Pheasant” (2001)<sup>2</sup>

Wallace Stevens and Jeremy Over found something remarkable about the relationship between pheasants and poetry. In 2001, Over made Stevens’s aphorism, “A poem is a pheasant,” the title of his poem and opened it with a line that makes reference to another Stevens aphorism, substituting the word “poem” with “pheasant.”<sup>3</sup> Over continues in this way for twenty-six lines, remixing other Stevens aphorisms into lines on pheasants. In the end he creates a poetic form that requires the reader to see and hear the word “pheasant” in almost every line.

In the late eighteenth century, literati poet-painter Yosa Buson (1716–1783 与謝蕪村) forged a new poetic form, an elegy entitled “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” (1777?; Hokuju Rōsen o itamu 北寿老仙をいたむ), that, like Stevens, draws a connection between the pheasant and poetic expression, and that, like Over, looks to his literary forebears to make that connection resonate with the reader. Buson’s elegy alludes to a long tradition in Chinese and Japanese poetry in which the pheasant was used as a conventional trope to represent grief and longing and Confucian moral and social values. In this way Buson represents elegiac feelings through the conventional deployment of the pheasant trope. At the same time, he represents the intellectual currents of the late eighteenth century, including a lyricism that involved the expression of personal feeling and a scientific empiricism that called for the representation of the natural world based on personal observation. Buson’s poetry by and large drew from the stock



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imagery and tropes afforded by traditional genres; but his elegy presents a unique case in which he represents a natural object—the pheasant—in a way that was also true to a late eighteenth-century literati poet’s personal perception of it, moving beyond poetic convention. Buson makes the pheasant an object of empirical representation in a poetic form of his own making, allowing the sound of the pheasant’s call to reverberate through its rhythm and repetition.

I use “form” to mean that which mediates the aesthetic experience of the poem and that which enlists the reader to participate in that experience. In other words, form is not just the words on the page; it is what those words “do” in the process of reading. The aesthetic experience afforded by the form of Buson’s elegy is traditional and modern.<sup>4</sup> I read its form as a metaphor for the ancient verb used to describe the pheasant’s call, *toyomu* (とよむ, 響む; to reverberate), and through its reverberation the poem simultaneously sets into motion multiple lyric events: the poet grieves and mourns the loss of his mentor and friend, while the call performs an incantation that summons the deceased and enlists the reader to feel for the crying bird and the grieving, mourning poet. What is innovative is the way Buson’s empirical representation of a pheasant’s call mediates sympathy—between the living and the dead, man and animal, and poet and reader—through the reverberation of sound.<sup>5</sup>

In this way I build upon the argument made by several Buson scholars, including the late Makoto Ueda (1931–2020), that the form of “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” was innovative for its time and even anticipated the future of Japanese poetry.<sup>6</sup> I contribute to Buson scholarship by offering a close reading of the elegy’s form, drawing attention to its visual and acoustic elements and showing how they are informed by an array of poems from the past and by new intellectual currents in the present. Beyond Japanese literary studies, my article also aims to put Buson’s poetry in conversation with work on lyric poetry and the affordances of poetic form in Anglo-European literary studies, showing how the sound of Buson’s elegy enlists the reader to feel sympathy for the poet as a human being and for the pheasant as a bird of the natural world.

### **Buson, Nature, and the Eighteenth Century**

Throughout Japanese history, poetry and painting have informed one another, a kinship that has generated poems that perform ekphrasis, or a literary description of a visual art object. Joseph Sorenson has found ekphrasis in Japanese poetry from as early as the Heian period (794–

1185).<sup>7</sup> Buson was a literatus (*bunjin* 文人) and professional painter of Chinese-style landscapes (*sansuiga* 山水画). In this tradition, paintings often included a poem (inscribed by the painter or by someone else) to describe the visual representation. This practice informed Buson's *haikai* (unorthodox verse 俳諧) poetry, a poetic genre that emerged in the Edo period (1603–1867) that affronted the sanctity of Heian court poetry (*waka* 和歌) and linked verse (*renga* 連歌) by representing images beyond the finite category of objects considered beautiful in the *waka* canon. Many of Buson's *haikai* verse, the vast majority of which comprise *hokku* (the opening verse 発句) to a *haikai-no-renga* (俳諧の連歌), were ekphrastic in the way they represented images from Chinese painting. “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” is a poem included under the large umbrella of the *haikai* genre, the specifics of which I discuss in more detail later.

Buson painted birds in genres including “Bird and Flower painting” (*kachōga* 花鳥画). His most representative works include paintings of mynah birds, kite-hawks, and crows. Some of these birds were merely a part of the literati repertoire, while others were also indigenous to Japan, suggesting that Buson had the opportunity to observe them. John Rosenfield has remarked that Buson was not interested in birds for their social or political meanings, writing, “had Buson been preoccupied by such matters he would likely have employed other, well-established Chinese emblems of loyalty and rectitude.”<sup>8</sup> Such emblems include the pheasant.

Rosenfield has argued that “the social and political references in [Buson's] poetry are rare and muted.”<sup>9</sup> I would add that these references include the aristocratic rituals recorded in *Kojiki* (712, Record of ancient matters 古事記) and *Nihon shoki* (720, The chronicles of Japan 日本書紀), the earliest sources of Japanese myth and religious thought. As I discuss later in this article, the pheasant appears in early Japanese myth. While it is difficult to ascertain whether Edo *haikai* poets read or knew much about these texts, through his intellectual network it is possible that Buson acquired some knowledge of this ancient aristocratic literature and its representation of pheasants.

To be sure, *haikai* poetry was not associated with the aristocracy, but with the commoner, and the genre allowed the poet to represent everyday images, including those from his own life. This may explain Buson's preference to represent the pheasant in *haikai* over other poetic genres. As I will show in my examination, Buson's elegy serves as an example of how the pheasant could occupy two realms of meaning: figural (as a trope from

poetry and painting) and real (from personal observation).

Over the course of his career as a painter Buson lived in the cultural centers of Osaka, Edo, and Kyoto, where he absorbed the intellectual currents of his time. The rise of empiricism in Japan in the eighteenth century reconceptualized the relationship between humanity and nature by offering a new epistemological understanding of the natural world as a disenchanted and desacralized space, paralleling the developments in European natural history and theories of positivism. As Federico Marcon has shown, the importation to Japan of late imperial Chinese encyclopedias and compendia organized plants and animals into taxonomies, suggesting that all objects in nature could be observed, categorized, described, and thereby “known” in a scientific and empirical way.<sup>10</sup> By the late eighteenth century Hiraga Gennai (1728–1780 平賀源内) and other scholars developed the fields of *materia medica* and *rangaku* (蘭学), or “Dutch studies,” both of which disseminated knowledge about humanity and nature in a scientific way.

Timon Screech has shown how eighteenth-century Japanese painters emulated the realist and empiricist modes of representation found in European art.<sup>11</sup> During the 1770s, Maruyama Ōkyo (1733–1795 丸山応挙) and other Kyoto painters incorporated the single vanishing point from Western painting, producing representations with three-dimensional perspectives that informed the ideal of the “true view” (*shinkei* 真景) in literati painting. The “true view” began as a term that referred to the sincerity of lyric expression and later came to include verisimilitude.<sup>12</sup>

In the spheres of literature and philosophy the eighteenth century in Japan was also an age of philology. Following the philological work of Keichū (1640–1701 契沖), Kamo no Mabuchi (1697–1769 賀茂真淵) and Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801 本居宣長) became the leaders of Native Studies (*kokugaku* 国学) during the late eighteenth century, examining ancient and classical texts, including *Man'yōshū* (ca. 759, Collection of ten thousand leaves 万葉集). Norinaga’s writings on *Genji monogatari* (eleventh century, The tale of Genji 源氏物語) rearticulated the purpose of literature as the representation of human experience.

These currents in natural history, medicine, art, and literature came together in a larger pool of ideas, or what Marcon has called a small-scale “Republic of Letters.”<sup>13</sup> Marcon has documented how Kimura Kenkadō (1736–1802 木村兼葭堂), a successful sake brewer and literatus, started a cultural salon at his house in Osaka and invited specialists across disciplines: painters, such as Buson, Ōkyo, and Uragami Gyokudō (1745–

1820 浦上玉堂) men of letters, such as Ueda Akinari (1734–1809 上田秋成) and Norinaga, and *rangaku* scholars, such as Ōtsuki Gentaku (1757–1827 大槻玄沢) and Shiba Kōkan (1747–1818 司馬江漢), and naturalists, such as Ono Ranzan (1729–1810 小野蘭山) and Ōdaka Motoyasu (1758–1830 大高元恭). As Marcon observes, “[Kenkadō’s] passion for natural history and other cultural pursuits became the catalyst that brought into existence, put into motion, and maintained through much needed financial lubrication a vast network of intellectual interactions and production.”<sup>14</sup>

The network of intellectual exchange generated a new zeitgeist that objectified nature in a scientific way, which informed the art and literature of the Late Edo period (1750s–1867), distinguishing it from that which came before. This rise in scientific empiricism also laid the foundation for the further development of realism and subjective expression in the nineteenth century. Maki Fukuoka has examined the emergence of realist representation in nineteenth-century literati culture, tracing the origin of the word *shashin* 写真, or “representation of the real” (later “photograph”) to studies in *materia medica* before the introduction of photography.<sup>15</sup> In the late nineteenth century, modern haiku poet Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902 正岡子規) rediscovered Buson’s poetry and promoted his *hokku* as a precursor to his own modern poetics of *shasei* (写生), or “sketching from life.” Shiki extolled Buson’s poetry for its “objective beauty” (*kyakkanteki bi* 客觀的美), believing that it represented things as they are.<sup>16</sup>

In the following sections, I perform a close reading of “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen,” showing how it absorbs the currents of Buson’s time and how it draws from the conventional poetic tropes associated with the pheasant in the Chinese and Japanese traditions. My reading fills a gap in scholarship on Buson’s elegy by drawing attention to the representation of emotion in time and space, the complex gendering of lyric voice and address, the relationship between painting through ekphrasis, and the relationship between sound and sympathy.

### “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen”

Buson composed “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” for his mentor and friend Hayami Shinga (1671–1745 早見晋我), who died in the first month of spring at age seventy-five when Buson was thirty.<sup>17</sup> Shinga adopted the nom de plume “Hokuju” 北寿 (lit. northern longevity) upon retirement. In the title, Buson addresses him with the honorific “Rōsen” 老仙 which means “the venerable immortal.” Some scholars speculate that Buson composed the poem in 1777, but it was not published until 1793, a decade

after Buson's death.<sup>18</sup>

Shinga was a sake brewer and *haikai* poet who studied under Takarai Kikaku (1661–1707 宝井其角), a disciple of Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694 松尾芭蕉). As H. Mack Horton has observed, this poetic genre of communal composition fostered strong relationships between master and disciple, and “death represented a particular crisis to identity and continuity.”<sup>19</sup> This crisis inspired Buson to forge a new poetic form through which he could express his grief and mourn the death of a beloved friend and mentor whom he regarded with the highest esteem.

The verb *itamu* (いたむ) from the elegy's title means “to grieve or feel sorrow for,” “to be pained by,” and “to mourn; lament.” I choose “mourning” because it is an English verb whose lay usage speaks to all these meanings, and includes the act of longing, which Buson demonstrates by composing a poem for his beloved mentor. I do not use “mourning” to reference a specific ritual or ceremonial rite, but merely the lay and commonplace practice of grieving and longing.

Beth Carter has observed that premodern writers consciously crafted language to express grief and pacify the spirits of the dead.<sup>20</sup> “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” is a poem that represents grief, and the object of consolation is the poet, not the dead. In his elegy Buson mediates his grief and the process of grieving through the diverse imagery and tropes drawn from the *haikai* and *kanshi* 漢詩 (Chinese or Sinitic verse) traditions and the rhythm and repetition afforded by the elegy's poetic form. I have included italics in my translation to reflect Muramatsu Tomotsugu's identification of the pheasant's monologue (*dokuhaku* 独白) in his examination of the poem's entire structure.<sup>21</sup>

#### Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen

You departed this morning; my heart this evening, scattered in a  
thousand pieces,  
Why are you so far away?

Longing for you, I walked to the hills and roamed;  
Why are the hills so sad?

- 5 The dandelions bloomed yellow, the shepherd's purse white;  
There is no one to share the view.

Is there a pheasant? I hear it crow and crow;  
*I had a friend. He lived across the river.*

*Poof—a Protean disperses into smoke, the west wind blows*

10 *So hard on the bamboo fields and the sedge plains,  
There is nowhere to take refuge.*<sup>22</sup>

*I had a friend. He lived across the river. Today,  
no pheasant crows hororo.*<sup>23</sup>

You departed this morning; my heart this evening, scattered in a  
thousand pieces,

15 Why are you so far away?

In my humble hut, by the Buddha I light no candles,  
I offer no flowers; in silence with a heavy heart, standing still tonight,  
All the more reverent.<sup>24</sup>

*hokuju rōsen o itamu*

*kimi ashita ni sarinu yūbe no kokoro chiji ni  
nanzo haruka naru*

*kimi o omōte okanobe ni yukitsu asobu*

*okanobe nanzo kaku kanashiki*

*tanpopo no ki ni nazuna no shirō sakitaru*

*miru hito zo naki*

*kigisu no aru ka hitanaki ni naku o kikeba*

*tomo ariki kawa o hedatete suminiki*

*hege no keburu no hato uchichireba nishi fuku kaze no*

*hageshikute ozasahara masugehara*

*nogaru beki kata zo naki*

*tomo ariki kawa o hedatete suminiki kyō wa*

*hororo tomo nakanu*

*kimi ashita ni sarinu yūbe no kokoro chiji ni*

*nanzo haruka naru*

*waga io no amida butsu tomoshibi mo monosezu*

*hana mo mairasezu sugosugo to tatazumeru koyoi wa*

*koto ni tōtoki*

北寿老仙をいたむ

君あしたに去ぬゆふべのころ千々に

何ぞはるかなる

君をおもふて岡のべに行つ遊ぶ

をかのべ何ぞかくかなしき

蒲公の黄に薺のしろう咲たる

見る人ぞなき

雉子のあるかひたなきに鳴を聞ば

友ありき河をへだてゝ住にき

へげのけぶりのはと打ちれば西吹風の

はげしくて小竹原真すげはら

のがるべきかたぞなき  
 友ありき河をへだてゝ住にきけふは  
 ほろゝともなかぬ  
 君あしたに去ぬゆふべのこゝろ千々に  
 何ぞはるかなる  
 我庵のあみだ仏とし火もものせず  
 花もまいらせずすごすごとゝめる今宵は  
 ことにたうとき<sup>25</sup>

The poem opens with the reality that Shinga is gone, and the speaker's heart is in disarray. The speaker walks to the hills where he finds signs of spring in the dandelions and shepherd's purse blossoms. This is where the speaker would spend time with his friend Shinga, and while thinking of him, he suddenly hears the call of what sounds like a pheasant. The poem shifts voice and enters a monologue (rendered in italics) by a pheasant lamenting the death of a friend. Then the poem shifts back to the human speaker's voice, which is marked by the repetition of the first line. The poem concludes with a scene of silent vigil in darkness.

Buson composed some poetry in the *kanshi* genre, but his *haikai* verse vastly outnumbered these poems. He also preferred to combine *kanshi* and *haikai*, creating new composite forms like the poem exhibited here. To a certain degree the alternating “five-seven-pulse” (*go-shichi-chō* 五七調) in many of the lines in “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” resembles the alternating lines of five and seven syllables in the *chōka* (long poems 長歌) and *banka* (laments 挽歌) genres in *Man'yōshū*, but the meter is irregular and beyond generic distinction.

In Japanese literary history, the poem has been called a “lyric” (抒情詩 *jojōshi*) that transcends the popular “pleasure quarter songs” (*yūrikayō* 遊里歌謡) composed by *haikai* poets during the early eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Sharing the formal and generic irregularity of these songs, Buson's elegy has been categorized under the ad hoc genres *haishi* (俳詩) or *washi* (和詩), which refer to poems that are neither *haikai* or *kanshi*, but something in between.<sup>27</sup> Despite this categorization, Buson's elegy is singular for seamlessly blending *haikai* and *kanshi* beyond distinction.

In the following sections, I examine how “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” is a new poetic form, falling in between genres and traditions, beyond generic distinction. I begin by showing how the apostrophe, or poetic address, in the elegy alludes to the way other poets have represented poetic voice in *haikai*, *kanshi*, Japanese myth, and late imperial Chinese theater.



### The Pheasant's Call

The rupture that opens the poem is echoed in images that mediate feelings of grief in temporal and spatial ways. The first line frames the trauma of loss in the span of one day: the poet mourns from the moment in the morning he learns of Shinga's death to the moment around twilight when he realizes that his heart is in a state of disarray, "scattered in a thousand pieces." The adjectival noun *chiji* (a thousand pieces 千々) describes the heart (and mind) of the poet as "*shattered* in a thousand pieces," as other translations have suggested.<sup>28</sup> The particle *ni* makes it an adverb, indicating that these pieces have also moved in myriad directions, hence "scattered." The original term *chiji* literally means "thousands and thousands," the repetition of which highlights the great number of pieces, as well as the myriad directions to which these pieces have scattered. *Chiji* also refers to the manifold forms the heart and mind can take in a contemplative state, a spatial metaphor to describe the protean nature of the heart during times of sorrow, and the boundless depths of the poetic imagination.

Although explicit mention of the pheasant does not come until Line 7 of Buson's poem, "Is there a pheasant? I hear it crow and crow," the spatial image of a heart "scattered" or "shattered" into a thousand pieces in the opening lines already evokes the pheasant in *haikai*. In the *hokku* below, Mukai Kyorai (1651–1704 向井去来) represents the sound of pheasant's call, figuring it as the spatial and sonic image of a waterfall basin shattering:

Breaking the waterfall basin:  
A pheasant cries  
*Hororo.*  
*takitsubo mo / hishige to kiji no / hororo kana*  
滝壺もひしげと雉のほろろ哉<sup>29</sup>

Ebara Taizō observes that in contrast to the plain and simple representations of the pheasant's call in the *waka* tradition beginning with *Man'yōshū*, Kyorai's poem "combines multiple layers of subjectivity" (*fukuzatsu na shukan ga tomonatte iru* 複雑な主観が伴っている).<sup>30</sup> These layers refer to the images of sound the poet uses to represent the feeling of grief. The speaker describes the immeasurable weight and resonance of the cry through the metaphor of a waterfall basin shattering or breaking

(*takitsubo mo hishige to*). The image of water falling evokes the overflow of tears suggested by the assonance between *hororo* and *horohoro* (streaming tears).<sup>31</sup> What breaks is not the flow of water, but the basin in which it falls. In other words, the reverberation of the pheasant's call is so powerful and the gravity of loss that it represents is so great that even the space that naturally forms to contain the water loses its containment. Kyorai's poem layers the onomatopoeia *hororo*, a non-representational medium of sound, with another sound, the metaphor of a waterfall basin breaking. The poem thereby ends with the ineffable yet deeply resonant feeling of loss and longing through the figuration and imagination of sounds.

The second line of Buson's elegy "Why are you so far away?" echoes the spatial meanings of *chiji* and its resonances with kindred images of shattering in the *haikai* tradition. The line also gives *chiji* its meanings of unlimited distance and variation a temporal dimension. The line opens with *nanzo*, a classical interrogative meaning "why," asking why Shinga is *haruka*, which means "distant" and "far away," but also "dark and indistinct."<sup>32</sup> Although in my translation, the question "Why are you so far away?" marks the subject as the deceased, which is how many critics have interpreted the line, the subject may continue from the first line in enjambment.<sup>33</sup> This means that Line 2 can be read as "Why [does my heart scatter] so far away [searching for you]?" With both readings in mind, the question refers to the vast distance that separates life and death, but also the distance and time of longing evoked by the *chiji* in the first line, and the darkness and obscurity of the directions to which the pieces of the poet's mind and heart have scattered in the search for the deceased.

The apostrophes that punctuate "Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen" question the role of voice and lyric address and show how part of the poem is about voices summoning the dead by incantation. The apostrophe to Shinga "Why are you so far away?" is echoed in the question the speaker asks of the hills: "Why are the hills so sad?" The apostrophes are addresses to Shinga, whom the reader knows is absent, displacing the irreversible structure of time when a person dies by making the absent present again in speech, in discourse. In his writing on the relationship between apostrophe and time in Western lyric poetry, Jonathan Culler argues: "Apostrophes displace this irreversible structure by removing it from linear time and locating it in a discursive time." He argues that apostrophes in elegies allow for more fluid movements in time because the elegy "replaces an irreversible temporal disjunction, the movement from life to

death, with a reversible alternation between mourning and consolation, evocations of presence and absence.”<sup>34</sup> By asking “Why are you so far away?” and “Why are the hills so sad?” the speaker summons Shinga back to life to converse with him, a move that contradicts the opening statement that Shinga is gone.

When the speaker reaches the spot on the hills where he and Shinga together once admired the white and yellow blossoms, he thinks he hears the incessant call (*hitanaki ni naku*) of a pheasant. In my translation, I use the verb “crow,” which refers to the loud and passionate cry of a cockerel, often heard during mating season in spring. The passionate crow of a male pheasant, although illusory, answers the apostrophe that opens the elegy, which is the voice of a woman, suggested by the use of the second-person pronoun *kimi* (you 君). These opening lines have led scholars to read the poem alongside ancient Chinese ballads, including ancient-style poetry (古詩 *gushi*) and Yuefu (Music Bureau 樂府) poetry.<sup>35</sup> These genres were popular among Chinese poets since the Six Dynasties (220–589), and were revived in the “New Yuefu” (Ch. Xin yuefu 新樂府) genre by the Tang dynasty (618–907). Poets who practiced in these genres often borrowed the voice of a woman to articulate their inarticulate feelings of love and affection for fellow men—in Buson’s case, his beloved mentor and friend Shinga.<sup>36</sup>

By opening his elegy with the voice of a woman and later giving voice to a pheasant, Buson also alludes to representations of mourning in ancient Japanese myth and religious practice. As Gary Ebersole writes, “the mourners in early Japanese funeral rituals were often equated with birds, though it is unclear whether they actually dressed as birds and imitated them in some fashion or whether the reference is simply metaphorical.”<sup>37</sup> In the myth of Ame-no-waka-hiko (天若日子), the gods send a pheasant named Nakime (哭女), or “weeping woman,” from the heavens down to earth. Ame-no-waka-hiko takes his divine bow and shoots the pheasant with an arrow, killing her, while the arrow flies back to heaven. The gods cast the arrow back down to earth, striking Ame-no-waka-hiko in the chest, killing him. The pheasant is the principal weeping mourner in the post-death scene.<sup>38</sup>

These Nakime eventually became a part of Buddhist funerary practices. In his study of death rituals in the Edo period, Nam-lin Hur has shown that in the event of death in the family, mortuary practices largely comprised four rites: “calling back the soul” (*shōkon* or *sosei*), “appeasing the soul,” “transforming [the deceased] into a Buddha,” and “sending off

the soul.”<sup>39</sup> The purpose of the first rite was to lure the soul back to the body so that the dead could come back to life. When performing this rite, family members, relatives, and neighbors wail for two purposes: to express sorrow and to call back the soul of the departed. “Calling the soul” (*tamayobi*) was a spirit-beckoning rite in Japan since ancient times, and its performance in Edo Buddhist practice was not uniform: “Most commonly, a family member would climb onto the roof of the house and, facing in the direction of the family gravesite, a mountain, the sea, the west, or the deceased, would shout something like ‘please come back [the name of the deceased].”<sup>40</sup> Over time the role of wailing fell to women (female members and female villagers) since it was thought that women were closer to the divine than men. This role was eventually taken over by professional mourning women called *nakime*.<sup>41</sup>

In some ways, the monologue (Lines 8–13 in italics) performed by the pheasant in Buson’s elegy alludes to the Buddhist or more ancient and native rite of “calling back the soul.” As Hur observes, it was common for the mourner to call out the name of the deceased. But Buson’s elegy is not that simple or straightforward. The pheasant monologue is metaphorical, figuring the relationship between Buson and Shinga as akin to that between two pheasants. Considering the Neo-Confucian ideology that defined the Edo period, the translation and popularity of Chinese vernacular literature, and Buson’s practice in Chinese poetry and painting, I argue that Buson deploys the pheasant as a trope for the Confucian bond between mentor and disciple and husband and wife, as represented in the tradition of Chinese and Japanese poetry.

As a performance, the pheasant monologue in Buson’s poem also parallels the representation of staged ventriloquy of animal voices (including birds) in seventeenth-century Chinese vernacular fiction, especially in the strange tales of Pu Songling (1640–1717 蒲松齡). Ueda Akinari—a member of Buson’s *haikai* circle—wrote works of fiction about ghosts and the supernatural that were informed by this genre of Chinese literature. Yiren Zheng has shown how Chinese works that represent ventriloquy and create disembodied—or what she calls “acousmatic”—voices display an awareness of the material conditions that mediate sound in the narrative.<sup>42</sup> Buson’s poem, however, does not reveal the secret of the magic trick, as it were, and allows the reader to stay enchanted by the performance.

The dialogue, through the magic of metaphor, sets into motion a stream of allusions that illustrate how grief and longing as tenor, and how

the pheasant's call as vehicle, form a trope in Japanese poetry. In the following sections I explore how "Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen" alludes to representations of the pheasant in the Chinese and Japanese traditions, both of which informed Buson's *haikai* poetry. In so doing, I do not claim to offer an exhaustive list of allusions. As Edward Kamens has shown in his study on *utamakura* (poetic toponyms 歌枕) in the *waka* tradition, when a poem names a specific place, it also evokes the collective of poems that share that place, linking the one poem to the entire continuum of Japanese poetry.<sup>43</sup> In a similar vein, I will show how the image of the pheasant can transport the reader throughout the Chinese and Japanese traditions.

### The Pheasant Trope

Birds appear in the foundational texts of Chinese and Japanese poetry. The *Shijing* (ca. eighth century BCE, Classic of poetry 詩經) opens with a poem that describes the song of an osprey. The Japanese preface to *Kokinshū* (905, Collection of poems new and old 古今集) argues that the warbler's song is akin to the feelings of the human heart:

Japanese poetry has the human heart as seed and myriads of words as leaves. It comes into being when men use the seen and the heard to give voice to feelings aroused by the innumerable events in their lives. The song of the warbler among the blossoms, the voice of the frog dwelling in the water—these teach us that every living creature sings.<sup>44</sup>

Pheasants, like other natural images in poetry, were often used as metonyms for human beings and symbols for human values. Since the beginning of the Chinese and Japanese traditions, poets deployed the poetic trope of the pheasant calling for its mate or child to represent the constancy of marital and parental bonds in a Confucian society. Such values were transmitted through poetic tropes (metonyms, metaphors, symbols) using birds and other natural imagery.

In the Chinese tradition, Buson alluded to pheasants (*zhi* 雉) that appear in poems from the Tang and Song dynasty (960–1279). Tang poetry's influence in Japanese literature can be found as early as the Heian period (795–1185). By the Edo period, Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728 荻生徂徠) saw to its revival as a part of a literary movement to compose poetry using models from antiquity.<sup>45</sup> After his death, Sorai's disciple and Buson's teacher Hattori Nankaku (1683–1759 服部南郭)

published *Tōshi sen* (Ch. Tangshi xuan; Selections of Tang poetry 唐詩選) in 1724.

Han Yu (768–824 韓愈) was one of the many poets anthologized in *Tōshi sen*, and his poetry was disseminated in collections imported from China and reprinted in Japan before and during Buson’s time.<sup>46</sup> Buson read Chinese poetry and often referenced Tang poets (especially Wang Wei 王維, 699–759) in his *haikai*.<sup>47</sup> Buson’s deployment of the pheasant trope in his elegy evokes Han Yu’s poem “Song of the Pheasants Fly at Dawn” (Zhi chao fei zao 雉朝飛操), which describes the Confucian patriarchy through the figure of male and female pheasants:

Inspired by the story of Mu Duzi who at 70 years old was without a wife and sees a pair of pheasants flying together.	牧犢子七十 無妻見雉雙飛感之而作
Pheasants flying	雉之飛
In the morning sun,	於朝日
A flock of hens and a lone cockerel.	羣雌孤雄
Their spirits high, hearts carefree—	意氣橫出
Should they head east, they’ve gone west,	當東而西
Should they stop to eat, they’re in flight again;	當啄而飛
Whether to fly or whether to feed,	隨飛隨啄
The hens coo and coo, following his lead.	羣雌粥粥
Alas, I am just a man,	嗟我雖人
I cannot compare to those birds:	曾不如彼雉雞
Since birth and after 70 years,	生身七十年
Without a wife or concubine.	無一妾與妃 <sup>48</sup>

The poem’s title alludes to a song of the same title in the Yuefu genre, and as a “song” (*zao*) it is sung to the musical accompaniment of a zither. The poem tells the story of Mu Duzi, a recluse from the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), who even in his old age has not married. The bond between the female and male pheasants described in the poem and in other poems from the Yuefu tradition serve as a metaphor for marital fidelity. In Han Yu’s poem the group of hens perform their docile obedience toward the cockerel by cooing or murmuring a sound of compliance represented by the onomatopoeia *zhou zhou* (粥粥). The speaker laments that he cannot compare to the pheasants, who, unlike him, possess vigor and companionship. Such a state evokes the loneliness and melancholy that characterize many songs in the Yuefu tradition.

Scenes featuring pheasants and other birds were also metaphors for life in court officialdom. Charles Hartman has observed that the pheasant represents the “constant and firm” (*geng jie* 耿介) rectitude of a man who displays fealty to his lord. In other contexts *geng jie* is associated with aloofness, stubbornness and unconventionality, attributes that describe one of the earliest Chinese lyric poets Qu Yuan (340–278 BCE? 屈原).<sup>49</sup> Qu Yuan was a statesman from the Warring States period who fell out of favor with King Huai of Chu and was subsequently banished from the court to suffer in lonely exile. To demonstrate his undying loyalty to the court, Qu Yuan is said to have composed “Encountering Sorrow” (Li Sao 離騷), a long lament whose free-style form broke poetic conventions. Qu Yuan’s lyrical self-expression and innovation in Chinese poetic form may have inspired Buson to demonstrate his devotion to Shinga by breaking the rules of *haikai* and forging a new poetic form.<sup>50</sup>

In ancient Japan, pheasants were used as a trope for the separation between lovers after sexual consummation, as demonstrated by the *chōka* below, excerpted from *Nihon shoki*:

We are sleeping sweetly when  
 The bird of the yard,  
 The cock is heard crowing;  
 The bird of the moors,  
 The pheasant begins to boom.  
 Before I can say  
 How dear you are to me,  
 The dawn has come, my love.

*umai neshi to ni / niwatsutori / kake wa naku nari / notsutori wa / kigishi  
 wa toyomu / washikeku mo / imada iwazute / akenikeri wagimo*

味寝寝し間に庭つ鳥鶏は鳴くなり野つ鳥は鶉は響む愛しけくもいま  
 だ言はずて明けにけり我妹<sup>51</sup>

The *chōka* is a song about a prince courting a princess, forcing her into a sexual union. After describing the events leading to their consummation of love, the speaker describes the call of birds to figure his sexual desire for the princess and the time to take his leave of her. In response, the princess composes a song, expressing her sadness at parting from the prince at dawn. Although it is unknown whether Shinga and Buson were lovers, Buson’s allusion to the pheasant in this early Japanese poem shows how the abrupt disappearance of a beloved leaves the one left behind with

feelings of yearning and unfulfilled desire.

The weight of this yearning is communicated in part by the verb *toyomu* (響む), or “to boom” (see bolded text above). While the tone of the boom here suggests the need for more sexual excitement, in other contexts, the timbre or tone of the pheasant’s call is thought to be panicked and plaintive, making *toyomu* a metonym for the verb *uzuku* (疼く), or “to throb (with dull pain).” In both cases the pheasant’s call is one that can be heard across a distance, suggesting that the sound is powerful and emotive—either to express the desire to mate, or to cry in pain about separation (from a mate).

The verb *toyomu* or its compound verbs, including *naki-toyomu* (to cry and project its call) and *tachi-toyomu* (to take flight and project its call) can be found in multiple poems representing bird call in *Man’yōshū*, the oldest collection of Japanese poetry.<sup>52</sup> In the early 1930s modern poet Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886–1942 萩原朔太郎) observed that the longing in Buson’s poetry evoked the love poems in *Man’yōshū*, speculating that Buson was probably a close reader of the collection.<sup>53</sup>

Buson does not use the verb *toyomu* in his elegy, but the more ubiquitous verb *naku*, meaning “to cry” or “to call.” In the spirit of *toyomu*, though, he represents a pheasant projecting its call to its mate by including the onomatopoeia *hororo*, like in the poem below by Taira no Sadafun (872?–923 平貞文) from *Kokinshū*:

My tears overflow,  
*hororo*, like the sad call  
 of the lone pheasant,  
 flying up to seek a wife  
 sweet as young grass in spring fields.

*haru no no no / shigeki kusaba no / tsumagoi ni / tobidatsu kiji no / hororo  
 to zo naku*

春の野のしげき草葉の妻恋ひに飛び立つきじのほろろとぞ鳴く<sup>54</sup>

In the Japanese tradition, the pheasant is associated with the season of spring, reflected here in the poem’s setting on a spring plain (*haru no no*). From deep in the grass a cock pheasant takes flight in search of its female mate. The speaker represents the sound of its call with the onomatopoeia *hororo*, which can also refer to the sound of a bird beating its wings frantically. As suggested by the scene here, *hororo* is a panicked and plaintive call, and is assonant with the onomatopoeia for streaming tears,



*horohoro*. By using the onomatopoeia *hororo* for the pheasant's resonant call, the speaker suggests that he too is weeping.

In “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” Buson figures his relationship with his mentor as a romance between a hen and a cockerel, alluding to the conventional pheasant tropes that represent the constancy between male and female companions and the relationship between parent and child. Buson's predecessor Matsuo Bashō composed a *hokku* in which the speaker longs for his parents, a feeling of loss that conjures their voices in the sound of a pheasant's cry:

Endlessly longing  
For mother and father—  
The pheasant's cry.

*chichi haha no / shikiri ni koishi / kiji no koe*  
父母のしきりに恋し雉子の声<sup>55</sup>

Scholars Shiraishi Teizō and Ueno Yōzō read the poem as autobiography, since Bashō composed the poem in 1688, around the time both of his parents died: Bashō traveled to Mt. Kōya, where myriad souls are enshrined, and overcome by feelings of longing for his recently deceased parents, he imagined their reply in the form of a pheasant's cry.

Bashō deploys the pheasant trope to represent the constancy of the bond between parent and child in line with the poetic tradition, and to cope with his own loss and represent the process of grieving. The poem offers an example of a central way language can express the feeling of endless longing (*shikiri ni koishi*): through metaphor, the pheasant's cry (*kiji no koe*). The metaphor allows the speaker to contain his grief in the continuum of poetic representation, calling upon all the pheasant cries represented by poets time and again in the tradition.

In the Japanese tradition, pheasants are also used to represent the separation of lovers, as it was believed that the cockerel and hen pheasants sleep in different places. Below is a *waka* attributed to *Man'yōshū* poet Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (660–724 柿本人麻呂) in which the speaker compares himself and his lover to copper pheasants (*yamadori* 山鳥):

Am I to sleep alone  
This long night, long  
Like a drooping tail,  
Tail feathers of copper pheasants  
Resting mountains apart?

*ashihiki no / yamadori no o no / shidari o no / naganaga shi yo o /  
hitori kamo nemu*

葦引の山鳥の尾のしだり尾のながながし夜をひとりかも寝む<sup>56</sup>

Both cockerel and hen pheasants have tail feathers, but the cockerels are much longer. Hitomaro deploys the pheasant trope, using the image of the cockerel's long tail feathers as a metaphor for the long nights the male speaker sleeps alone, away from his mate.

The relationships figured by the pheasant in the poems by Bashō and Hitomaro are straightforward. In “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen,” however, the figuration of the intimate relationship between the speaker and deceased is not univocal, just like its form. The form of Buson's poem blends multiple poetic genres and combines multiple structures of intimacy: male-female, parent-child, brother-brother, and mentor-disciple (male-male). The word *tomo*, which means “friend” or “partner,” in the pheasant monologue, blurs the conventional relationship between cockerel and hen by blending heterosexual romance with fraternity and filial piety. Many commentators of the elegy have read the relationships between the speaker in the poem and the addressee, and between the present and absent pheasant, as emblematic of a filial relationship. Muramatsu Tomotsugu, for example, argues that Buson's longing for Shinga is overlaid with nostalgia and a longing for his mother.<sup>57</sup> The earlier *waka* by Taira no Sadafun describes a scene where a cock pheasant calls for his female mate (*tsuma*). There is a similar crowing and calling (*hororo*) in Buson's poem, but the hen pheasant laments that she “had a *friend*” (*tomo ariki*). In Confucian discourse, a “friend” (Ch. *you* 友, the same graph used for *tomo* in the elegy) signifies fraternal and brotherly love, and is related to the Confucian virtue of “filial piety” (*xiao* 孝).<sup>58</sup>

As I will show below, the pheasant trope was not limited to poetry. It also appeared in the visual culture that informed the lyricism of Buson's elegy and *haikai* practice.

### The Pheasant and Ekphrasis

The pheasant monologue in “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” invites the reader to imagine what the two pheasants might look like. Buson's readers, especially those in his circle of literati poet-painters, might have imagined a pheasant from Chinese painting. As literati culture continued to blossom in late imperial China, the pheasant's beautiful feathers were associated

with literati talent.<sup>59</sup> By the eighteenth century a wave of art and culture from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) informed *haikai* practice, giving rise to Sinophilia across intellectual spheres.<sup>60</sup>

In the sixteenth century, Japanese artists were already emulating Chinese paintings in which pheasants appear as male and female pairs, especially in the “Bird and Flower” genre, which began as early as the Song dynasty (960–1279) and continued to the late Qing dynasty (1644–1912). Muromachi period painter Kanō Shōei (1519–1592 狩野松栄) represented male and female pheasants in a diptych (Fig. 1).<sup>61</sup> Of the two pheasants represented in the painting, the cockerel has the beautiful and colorful feathers. Through ekphrasis, Buson’s elegy alludes to Chinese painting, imagining Shinga, as mentor, as a colorful cockerel, and Buson, in subordinate deference, a drab hen.



Figure 1. Kanō Shōei (1519–1592 狩野松栄). *Pheasants among Trees: Flowers of the Four Seasons* (ca. 1560s). Pair of hanging scrolls; ink, color, and gold on paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Public domain. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53237>.

It appears that Buson did not represent pheasants in “Bird and Flower” paintings as he did with the crow and other birds; but he did represent pheasants in *hokku*, a genre in which he made explicit references to Chinese poets and painters.<sup>62</sup> Buson’s practice as a Chinese-style painter and his encounters with scholars from various disciplines associated with Chinese learning (*kangaku* 漢学) gave him the opportunity to absorb (either directly or indirectly) Chinese theories of lyricism, including “the blending of feeling and scene” (*qing jing jiao rong* 情景交融), which describes the merging of a poet’s personal state of mind with scenes he beholds in the natural world. Fujita Shin’ichi has made similar observations, remarking that the dominant characteristic of Buson poems that represent a scene (*kei* 景) is that they “overflow with rhythms of feeling” (*jō no shirabe ga afurederu* 情の調べがあふれ出る).<sup>63</sup>

Chinese literature scholar Ling Hon Lam has discussed “the blending of feeling and scene” as a discourse that grew from the mid-thirteenth century through the end of Chinese imperial history.<sup>64</sup> In the seventeenth century, Chinese philosopher Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692 王夫之) was a major proponent of this discourse. Lam has critiqued the interpretation of “the blending of feeling and scene” as a representation of interior subjectivity. He argues that the structure of emotion in early modern Chinese literature is spatial, mediated by the theatricality of emotions in stage performance.<sup>65</sup> The theatricality of this Chinese lyricism can be seen in the pheasant monologue in Buson’s elegy.

While Lam’s argument about the spatiality of emotion is limited to vernacular Chinese prose, it is interesting to read alongside Buson’s ekphrastic experimentations in *hokku*. In my view, Buson infused the lyricism of “the blending of feeling and scene” in *hokku* that appeared as synecdoche for painted landscapes, including those that represented the pheasant. One could argue that these ekphrastic *haikai* were more visual and empirical than the poems by his predecessors because they were informed by Buson’s expertise as a painter, and as a painter he painted in the genres that he also represented in poetry. While composing poems on paintings had long been part of the Chinese and Japanese traditions, Buson’s work encourages the reader to think of his poetry as conventional and historically contingent. Considering the rise of scientific empiricism and the performance of eccentricity in Edo literati culture, it is reasonable to assume that Buson’s ekphrasis was a representation of his individual tastes.<sup>66</sup>

Whether Buson was viewing a painting or a scene in real life, he represented natural objects with a heightened sense of visual perception, drawing attention to form, color, and landscape. These poems, like the *hokku* below, displayed Buson’s eye as a visual poet and his empirical understanding of the natural world through the representational mode of painting:

The slow setting sun—  
A pheasant perched  
On the bridge.  
*osoki hi ya / kiji no ori-iru / hashi no ue*

遅き日や雉の下りゐる橋の上<sup>67</sup>

Buson’s *hokku* describes a scene where a pheasant is perched on top of a rustic bridge basking in the glow of twilight. The pheasant (*kiji*) likely refers to a Japanese green pheasant (*Phasianus versicolor*), whose plumage contains purplish-blue, green, red, and spotted-grey feathers.<sup>68</sup> As scholars Ogata Tsutomu and Morita Ran observe, the variegated feathers gleam in the glow of sunset, presenting a rare view of beauty during a moment of temporal suspension. As the colors of its plumage change ever so slightly with the slow descent of the sun, the image of the pheasant becomes all the more vibrant and vivid.

Buson displayed his painterly attention to the pheasant in several *haiga* (俳画), a genre of Japanese painting that paired *haikai* (often *hokku*) with a seemingly simple illustration. He produced a *haiga* that depicted a hunter with a musket in one hand and a dead pheasant slung over his shoulder.<sup>69</sup> Unlike the “Bird and Flower” genre of Chinese painting, the *haiga* genre allowed for the representation of simple and crude images. Buson inscribed a *hokku* as an ekphrastic description (*jigasan* 自画賛) of his illustration (Fig. 2) of a hunter with a pheasant:

The pheasant shot,  
Returning on the road home  
While the sun is high.  
*kiji uchite / modoru ieji no / hi wa takashi*

雉打てもどる家路の日は高し<sup>70</sup>

The *hokku* supplements the simple illustration with a narrative: after shooting the pheasant, the hunter returns home. The third measure of the *hokku* aestheticizes the aftermath of his kill: the spring sun is still high in

the sky shining upon the dead pheasant, illuminating its beautiful feathers.

The previous *hokku* about hunting pheasants also demonstrates how the pheasant was not only used as a trope for Confucian values. Such *hokku* raise the possibility that the *haikai* genre as a whole was informed by the rise of scientific empiricism in the Edo period, allowing poets to represent personal experience in addition to conventional tropes. In what follows, I show how the pheasant trope is used to represent death and absence.



Figure 2. Buson’s illustration of a hunter with a pheasant (left), followed by his inscription “*Kiji uchite / modoru ieji no / hi wa takashi*” (right). See *BZ*, 1: 275. For a larger image, see *BZ*, 6: 399.

### Death of the Pheasant

In “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” the speaker hears the call of what sounds like a pheasant (*kigisu no aru ka*), whereupon the poem enters a monologue in which a hen pheasant laments the disappearance of a friend. The hen, or the female voice of the poet, then uses metaphor to describe the fugitiveness of life: she imagines a *hege*, or “Protean,” transforming into smoke (*keburi*). The image of smoke alludes to earlier poems in the tradition that gave the pheasant trope its metaphorical associations with death and transformation. The poem below by Retired Emperor Gotoba (1180–1239 後鳥羽院) deploys the pheasant trope in a metaphor for funerary cremation:

On Musashino plain  
 How the pheasant  
 Longs for its child!  
 In the smoky gloom  
 Its calls get lost.

*musashino no / kigisu ya ika ni / ko o omou / keburu no yami ni / koe madou nari*

むさし野の雉子やいかに子を思ふけぶりのやみに声まどふなり<sup>71</sup>

Unlike the straightforward scenes in the poems by Hitomaro and Taira no Tadafun, the scene here is filled with distress and confusion. As an *utamakura*, Musashino is a place of historical and cultural remembrance, and here it is likely conjuring memories of the battles fought during the Genpei War (1180–1185), a civil war between the Taira (Heike) and Minamoto (Genji) clans that ended in the fall of the Taira. Musashino has appeared in literary texts since *Man'yōshū*. Medieval poets used it as a poetic topos, likely referencing the battles that took place there during the Genpei War. Throughout the tradition Musashino has been represented as a place of nostalgia and remembrance.<sup>72</sup> Reflecting on the gravity of loss associated with this historic site, the speaker observes how the parent pheasant can long (*omou*) for its child even when the sound of its call is somehow muted or obscured by the smoke (*keburu*). In the natural world the smoke likely refers to fog or mist that forms at dawn on the Musashino plain; as a metaphor for human affairs, the smoke can be interpreted as the formless remains of a body, the cloud of smoke from its funerary cremation.<sup>73</sup>

Synesthesia is characteristic of *waka* from the medieval period onward, exemplified here by how the image of formless gloom (*yami*) of smoke somehow envelopes the sound of the pheasant's plaintive call, resulting in it getting lost (*madou*). It is common for poets to use the word *koe*, or “voice,” to represent the call of a bird; but the position of *koe* at the end of the poem after the images of the pheasant, its child, and the smoke leaves the source of the call ambiguous. This allows the speaker to make a poignant observation about the gravity of loss, that the calls of the living and the distant cries of the dead are just as incommunicable as a cloud of smoke.

Deploying the same *utamakura* Musashino, Buson composed a *hokku* in which the pheasant appears as a figure for absence, conjuring the memories of bygone wars and the ghosts of fallen warriors:

The pheasant cries—  
 On the grasses of Musashino  
 The eight Heike houses.  
*kiji naku ya / kusa no musashi no / hachiheiji*  
 雉子鳴や草の武蔵の八平氏<sup>74</sup>

The “eight Heike houses” (*hachiheiji* or *hachiheishi*) refer to the fallen samurai clans from the Kazusa, Chiba, Miura, Toi, Chichibu, Ōba, Kajiwara, and Nagao provinces.<sup>75</sup> The pheasant’s cry serves as a metaphor for the heroic cries of the eight clans who fought in the past, and for the mournful cry of the speaker in the present calling out to commemorate fallen warriors.

In “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” a supernatural being (the *hege*, or Protean) disappears into smoke, evoking poems in the tradition in which the pheasant was used in metaphors for corporeal transformation. In Japanese and Chinese mythology, birds are a common form for metamorphosis because it was thought that their ability to fly brought them close to the divine.<sup>76</sup> Ideas of transformation from myth were later blended with related ideas from Buddhism and the metaphysics of Neo-Confucian thought, which entered Japan during the Kamakura period (1192–1333) and became the dominant philosophy of the Edo (Tokugawa) period. In Buddhism transformation is associated with death and rebirth. A poem by Buddhist monk Jakuren (1139–1202 寂蓮) brings these ideas of transformation together, describing the pheasant’s call as a metaphysical object of transformation in order to escape death:

The hunter is poised  
 On the hunting moor where a pheasant  
 Longs for its mate,  
 Wishing it can transform  
 Into the sound of its call.  
*karibito no / iru no no kigisu / tsuma koite / naku ne bakari ni / mi o ya kaeten*  
 かり人のいる野の雉子妻こひてなく音ばかりに身をやかへてん<sup>77</sup>

Like Gotoba’s *waka*, Jakuren’s poem also describes a spring landscape where a pheasant longs for its mate. Here the presence of a hunter (*karibito*) infuses the scene with suspense, as the pheasant may soon fall victim to the hunter’s arrow and be unable to project its plaintive call. Under duress and as a means to escape death, the pheasant wishes that it



could transform (*kaeten*) its body (*mi*) into the sound of its call (*naku ne*). The *ten* (or *temu*) suffix attached to the verb *kaeru* (to transform) communicates the pheasant's desire, through the speaker, to be able to make that transformation, and that that transformation will be complete. Should the pheasant's wish come true, its form would be the mere sound of longing, an immortal form without a material body, invulnerable to danger.

Buson's "Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen" seems to grant Jakuren's pheasant its desperate wish: to transform into the sound of its call. The *hege*, or Protean, is the creature that changes form and appears in Edo literature on the supernatural.<sup>78</sup> The wind blows strong upon the spring landscape, and before the Protean in smoke form can take shelter, he is blown away. Echoing the cock pheasant's passionate and repetitive call, the hen repeats the line with which she began her recollection. She ends her monologue with the reality that despite what the human speaker thinks he had heard while roaming on the hill, "Today / No pheasant crows *hororo*."

The inability to hear *hororo* suggests the need of something else to convey that meaning. Similar to Kyorai's *hokku* in which the meaning of *hororo* is not self-evident and therefore requires metaphor (the sound of a waterfall basin breaking) in order to be heard and understood, Buson's elegy creates a situation in which its speakers—the human speaker and the hen—require another means, a metaphor, in order to hear and transform *hororo*: like the sound *hororo* falling on deaf ears, and the Protean that poofs into smoke and vanishes in the wind. The Protean's mysteriousness as a supernatural being that can change form at will is also a figure for the *hororo*, which, as I will show below, takes form in the sound of the elegy's poetic form.

### Sound and Sympathy

As I have shown above, the representation of the pheasant in "Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen" in Buson's poetry was informed by a long history of tropes that appear in mythology and in Chinese and Japanese poetry and painting. By the eighteenth century, the blossoming of Ming visual culture and the rise of scientific empiricism informed the representation of pheasants, allowing the Edo poet and painter to represent the bird as a natural, disenchanted, and desacralized object.

Since many of Buson's *hokku* depend on the reader's knowledge of Chinese poetry and painting to make sense, the image of the pheasant is

often figural or allegorical. Marcon has documented the paradigm shift that objectified the natural world in the eighteenth century. Although Buson was not a scientist, he was a poet-painter who socialized with intellectuals across disciplines, forming relationships that allowed him to develop an open mind and experiment in his poetry. Under this new Edo episteme, there was new distinction between subject and object, between humanity and nature. Once nature was made an object of empirical observation, it was a “thing” that the subject could “know.” For Buson the objectification of nature mediated his thoughts and feelings about nature. To be sure, I am not claiming that one should read all Buson poems in this way; Buson was a poet of his time who experimented with new ideas, inviting the reader to imagine how those ideas might play out in his poetry. I contend that the scientific and painterly gaze afforded by the intellectual and aesthetic trends of his time informed Buson’s representation of the pheasant in his elegy, allowing him to represent how a late eighteenth-century literatus could share feelings for the pheasant, sympathizing with the bird through the mediation of a new poetic form.

Sympathizing with the pheasant was also a way Buson represented the eighteenth-century zeitgeist about the relationship between literature and emotion, especially how literature stirs sympathy and empathy in the reader. Peter Flueckiger has shown how theorizations of empathy brought literary and political discourses together in eighteenth-century Japan.<sup>79</sup> When Buson’s contemporary Motoori Norinaga pronounced that the essence of *The Tale of Genji* was *mono no aware* (lit. “the pathos of things”), or “sympathy or empathy for the feelings of others,” he opened a new discourse that examined the relationship between literature and the representation of human emotion.<sup>80</sup> While Norinaga was mainly in conversation with scholars of *Genji* and poets of *waka*, his ideas about *mono no aware* spread beyond the sphere of *waka*, into *haikai* and into Buson’s literati circle:

What is it to know *mono no aware*? *Aware* originally described the cry of emotion [*nageki no koe*] uttered once the heart is stirred after seeing, hearing, or experiencing something [*mono*], much like the *aa!* or the *hare!* used in vernacular speech today.<sup>81</sup>

Norinaga argues that to know (*shiru*) or feel *mono no aware* is to be moved by something and expressing that emotion or feeling through communicable sounds like *aware*, *aa*, and *hare*.<sup>82</sup> This idea alludes to the Chinese classic “Record of Music” (Yue ji 樂記) in the *Li ji* (Book of rites

禮記), which states “when the human mind is moved, some external thing has caused it. Stirred by external things into movement, it takes on form in sound.”<sup>83</sup> Echoing the “Record of Music” and Norinaga’s description of *mono no aware*, Buson’s elegy represents how the emotions of a poet during a time of mourning take form in sound, in cries of emotion (*nageki no koe*) mediated by figurations of the pheasant’s call.

In “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” Buson mourns the death of a friend by transforming the pheasant trope and figuring the pheasant’s call in a way that affords the ancient verb *toyomu* (to reverberate) a poetic form. Buson deploys repetition and rhythm to simulate the call, sympathizing with the pheasant, an external object of the natural world. The reverberation of the call simultaneously creates a lyric event in which the reader is enlisted to sympathize with the grieving poet by hearing and feeling the sound, the reverberation in the poem. This sympathetic attention to the pheasant participates in the empiricism of his time by representing the call with fidelity to a late eighteenth-century observer’s personal experience hearing the pheasant’s call.<sup>84</sup> It also critiques this new episteme by re-inscribing the enchanted and the sacred back into the natural world as a means to understand, metaphysically or spiritually, the experience of death, grieving, mourning, and longing. Buson does this through the reverberation in poetic form, which affords him a means to represent the grieving process and perform an incantation that summons the dead back to life.

This summoning act, in some ways, speaks to views of death and funerary ritual in ancient and premodern Japan. As Ebersole has argued, “the early Japanese did not consider death to be a permanent or irreversible state.”<sup>85</sup> For example, *Nihon shoki* mentions the custom of “calling the soul” (*tama-yobi*), revealing the ancient Japanese belief that the dead could be revived.<sup>86</sup> According to Hur there were many accounts in the late eighteenth century of successful resuscitation of the dead: “For the Tokugawa Japanese, it did not matter whether or not these events had actually occurred: what mattered was the possibility, however slight, of bringing their loved ones back to life. Thus, the custom of calling back the soul lingered on.”<sup>87</sup> While Buson’s elegy may not be a “ritual” in the formal sense, which is the prescribed form or order of a religious or ceremonial rite, it does suggest the premodern belief that calling back the soul was possible.<sup>88</sup> What affords this possibility is the elegy’s poetic form.

As a poem, “Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen” simultaneously sets into motion multiple events, including grieving, mourning, and summoning the

dead, and not in any prescribed form or order. This is because the elegy's form is irregular, straddling the *haikai* and *kanshi* genres and alluding to an array of poems from the Japanese and Chinese traditions. Its poetic form makes the events of grieving, mourning, and spirit-summoning unique to Buson's moment in the late eighteenth century, using sound in an innovative way to perform an act of sympathy for the poet at a time of mourning and grieving, and for the pheasant as a bird of the natural world.

This sound is *hororo*, an onomatopoeia that many poets have deployed in their poems to represent the call of a pheasant. Buson did this too in his elegy, but, for the first time, also gave *hororo* a poetic form of its own: the feelings of passion, excitement, and affection represented by the sound *hororo* are audible in the repetition of lines, which reverberate, or *toyomu*, in the poem. In tune with other elegiac poems in the tradition—from poetry in *Man'yōshū* to the chorus and dialogue in *nō* plays from the medieval period—Buson's elegy uses repetition to showcase a lyric performance that blends pain and pleasure, as the lyric mind mourns a loss but to a beat. This beat produces a rhythm that mediates feeling without putting a stamp on what those feelings necessarily are.

The repetition of Lines 1–2—“You departed this morning; my heart this evening, scattered in a thousand pieces, / Why are you so far away?”—in Lines 14–15 in the poem echoes the repetition of Line 8—“*I had a friend. He lived across the river*”—in Line 12—“*I had a friend. He lived across the river. Today*,”—in the hen's monologue. The only difference in the hen's speech is the addition of “Today / No pheasant crows *hororo*” (*kyō wa / hororo tomo nakanu*). The *tomo* is being used as an emphatic adverb for *hororo*, but it is also homophonous with the *tomo* (friend) that appears in the hen's monologue. This suggests that the *hororo* refers to *his* call, and not hers or any other bird's. This difference highlights the fact that *hororo* is not audible in the fiction of the poem, but on a meta-formal level resonates in the repetition and rhythm of the entire poem: a pheasant's call that recurs again and again.

This rhythm mediates the relationship between poet and reader, and the connection to divine experience. The incantatory power of repetition in Buson's elegy speaks to Ebersole's argument that repetition in *Man'yōshū* poems served a sacred and ceremonial purpose in death rituals, and therefore had religious and aesthetic import. Although Buson's elegy is not a ritual lament, nor has it been noted to have religious use, its deployment of rhythm resembles that of an incantatory act to summon the deceased back to life: this plays out in the poet's apostrophes and in the

fiction between the hen and cockerel, whose presence manifests in an illusory sound caught by the ear of the human speaker, and in an illusory imaginary image of a Protean conjured in the hen's memory and imagination.

Reading the elegy aloud performs the incantation: the repetition of lines and the repetition of sounds (such as *ki* and *no*) create a rhythm, producing a somatic feeling beyond representation in language, a representation possible only in sound, which is non-representational. In the history of lyric in Anglo-European literature, Jonathan Culler observes that free verse forms enabled poets to escape the shackles of classical meter and enter a direct relationship with the divine.<sup>89</sup> He argues that “rhythm is an event without representation” because it suggests something else, an experience beyond the poem itself.<sup>90</sup> In the process of reading, the reader becomes aware of its rhythm, its pulse, and its something-else-ness, which creates sympathy for the poet in communion with the spirit world and the divine.

The conclusion of the elegy contradicts the sound made audible by the repetition and rhythm in the form of the poem; and yet at the same time, the ending echoes the silence that pervades the content of the poem. After the repetitions, the speaker finds himself in his humble hut before an image of (Amida) Buddha. Thereupon he mentions what he does *not* perform: he lights no candles, and he offers no flowers, the acts of which intensify the gravity of loss because material objects seem to have no use here. He only offers stillness and reverence. The onomatopoeic adverb *sugosugo to*, translated above as “in silence with heart heavy,” speaks to the anxiety, heaviness, and stillness of the moment in crestfallen silence. The *sugosugo to* describes the manner in which the human speaker stands still (*tatazumeru*), in the wake of the incantatory charm from the earlier repetition and rhythm. The term also refers to the disappointment one feels immediately after expectations for excitement and pleasure go unfulfilled. If the repetition is the poem's performance, once it stops, the scene grows more silent than before, and the speaker returns home feeling unfulfilled.

The silence and feeling of awe that concludes the poem suggest that something magical is happening (the possibility that the departed has returned), which leaves the reader in a state of suspension, waiting for that something to materialize. The poem ends with a declaration that tonight will be “all the more reverent” (*koyoi wa / koto ni tōtoki*), which adds a layer of profound admiration and respect to the “in silence with heart heavy” by which the speaker stands still. This stillness in reverence

continues the eternal and divine moment, the awesome feeling that earlier resonated in the nerves and tensions between the words that recur and the images that repeat. Like *tōtoki*, the word “reverence” also means the quality that inspires a profound sense of awe, the feelings that strike a person when confronting the divine or the sublime. The poem thereby ends ambiguously: both in deferential silence and reverential awe, *as if* the song and dance in the incantation and rhythm had summoned a presence from absence. Tarrying in the moment of the “as if” is the aesthetic experience afforded by Buson’s poetic form.

Like in Buson’s *hokku* on pheasants, scenes in the elegy are figured as places of absence: the hill marks the spot where poet and friend once enjoyed each other’s company, and the plains of bamboo and sedge mark the spot where the Protean disappears. While the white and yellow blossoms evoke the vivid colors that characterize many of Buson’s *hokku* (though unexamined here), their role here is static and their beauty goes unappreciated, as the speaker laments “there is no one to share the view.” Buson deprives the elegy of color to bolster its somber theme, allowing the usual landscape of visual plenitude to be overtaken by a landscape of sound.

The way the elegy represents the pheasant’s call in the sound of its poetic form enlists the reader to sympathize with the grieving poet and wailing bird. Even though the poem ends, the pheasant’s call, by way of repetition, reverberates in the reader’s imagination as a residual echo beyond the containment of poetic form. Should a poet desire to represent immeasurable grief, composing a poem in which grief has no end is a sure way to do it. This is what Norinaga may have meant by “being overwhelmed by *mono no aware*.” In his essay “Isonokami sasamegoto” 石上私淑言 (1763; Personal views on poetry) Norinaga writes: “when *mono no aware* is so strong that it cannot be contained, it becomes hard to endure it and to control it once it lodges deep in one’s heart, despite all efforts to contain it.”<sup>91</sup> In Buson’s elegy the speaker’s efforts to contain grief all fail, as the *hororo* goes unheard and the Buddhist rituals are not performed.

I contend that Buson’s innovative deployment of the pheasant trope is evidence of his empiricism: rather than relying on conventional poetic genres—*waka*, *haikai*, *kanshi*—to mediate his longing and performing rituals (e.g. lighting candles, offering flowers, chanting the Buddha’s name, shouting the departed’s name) to contain his grief, Buson creates a new poetic form that represents grief as a personal experience tied to the natural

world through the figure of the pheasant. This representation of the pheasant is informed by the genres of painting in which Buson practiced and by the scientific empiricism of his time, which encouraged poets to walk into the wild (just like the elegy's human speaker "walked to the hills and roamed") and observe the pheasant as a bird of the natural world.

Buson shows his scientific empiricism by representing the pheasant's call (*hororo*), metaphorically, as rhythm and repetition in poetic form. At the same time, Buson reveals that a late eighteenth-century literati poet's personal relationship to nature can be imaginative as well: the metamorphosis of the Protean into smoke and into thin air, and the summoning of the dead back to life, all suggest a metaphysical or spiritual philosophy not determined by ancient myth, Buddhism, or Neo-Confucian thought. "Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen" reaches beyond such ideological frames because it is literature, and more important, a new poetic form that leaves interpretation wide open with possibility.

The mention of Amida Buddha in the poem may suggest that Buson was a follower of Jōdo-shū (浄土宗), or Pure Land Buddhism. Chanting or invoking the name of the Amida Buddha (*nenbutsu* 念仏) would allow him to achieve enlightenment and enter the Pure Land. At the end of the poem Buson left his Buddhist signature (see note 18), but Japanese scholars have avoided Buddhist interpretation. This may have to do with the fact that the poem is not didactic: it does not quote scripture, nor does it end by entering the Pure Land. Rather, the ending tarries in the moment of mourning in the material world. Buson's elegy shows that a human being, unlike nature, cannot live among the divine in infinite time, but he or she can feel the presence of the divine through sound as an aesthetic experience afforded by poetic form.

Although they wrote at different times and came from different literary traditions, Buson's poetry parallels the work of nineteenth-century American poet Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862). The representation of grief in "Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen" speaks to what Branka Arsic has described as "perpetual grief" in the writings of Thoreau, who wrote: "Only nature has a right to grieve perpetually, for she only is innocent." Arsic shows how Thoreau believed that only nature is capable of pure and perpetual grief because human grief is a loss that eventually gets restored: "Human grief doesn't infinitely abide with the lost but instead figures ways to self-regeneration."<sup>92</sup> Buson's elegy simultaneously engages in the process of mourning and avoids that very self-regeneration through the pheasant's call, which by the end of the poem reverberates indefinitely

beyond the containment of form.<sup>93</sup>

Pheasants continued to enchant the imagination of *haikai* poets in the Late Edo period and thereafter. But the way Buson's elegy innovatively represented the sound *hororo* beyond the mere word, working it into the weave of a new poetic form, may have left some poets wondering about the viability of words like *hororo* to represent their longing and empirical observation of pheasants. In the early nineteenth century Kobayashi Issa (1763–1828 小林一茶), who is well known for his poems on insects and animals, composed over fifty *hokku* on pheasants, including the one below:

The copper pheasant  
Does not cry *ken* or *hororo*  
Anymore.  
*yamakiji no / ken mo hororo mo / nakarikeri*  
山雉のけんもほろろもなかりけり<sup>94</sup>

The speaker's poignant affirmation of absence (*nakarikeri*) suggests that the pheasant is silent or even dead, which leaves the reader to imagine what its call may sound like. As a composer of *senryū* (the more ironic and cynical cousin of *hokku*), Issa may be commenting on the failure of language to represent the pheasant's call, that even the onomatopoeias *ken* and *hororo* are no longer viable in an age when representation in art and literature was moving towards realism.

After Thomas Edison's (1847–1941) invention of the phonograph in 1877, perhaps there was no longer a need for the poet to represent the pheasant's call using *hororo* or giving it a new idiom, as Buson had done. The idea that the pheasant's call could truly resonate and break the heart, however, continued to captivate the imagination of poets, even in the modern period:

The pheasant's call  
Peals across  
The great bamboo plain.  
*kiji no koe / ōtakehara o / nariwataru*  
雉子の声大竹原を鳴り渡る<sup>95</sup>

Modern novelist Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916 夏目漱石) composed the haiku (formerly known as *hokku*) above in spring of 1896 when he was a



high school teacher in the rural town of Kumamoto, Kyūshū. The poem can be read as an empirical account of Sōseki hearing the pheasant's call across a bamboo plain.

Considering Sōseki's later theoretical writings on the relationship between literature and sympathy, the poem can also be read as a metaphor for the way the pheasant trope has resonated throughout the poetic tradition, peeling across (*nariwataru*) the planes of poetic consciousness, like an acoustic beacon pulsing past memories of loss into form again. In "Mourning for Hokuju Rōsen" this pulse came in the form of the hen pheasant's repeated cries: "I *had* a friend" (*tomo ariki*). In his writings, Thoreau represented birds as "immortal beings in perpetual change and capable of hosting what has been," making them "living relics."<sup>96</sup> The pheasants represented in Japanese poetry are also painful reminders of loss in seek of renewal. And by the end of Buson's elegy, that renewal comes in the form of residual reverberation—just read and listen.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous: Poems, Plays, Prose* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 194. Wallace Stevens (1879–1955) is a twentieth-century American poet, whom literary critic Harold Bloom called "the best and most representative American poet of our time."

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Over, *A Little Bit of Bread and No Cheese* (Manchester, U. K.: Carcanet Press, 1999). Jeremy Over (1961–) is a contemporary British poet.

<sup>3</sup> Stevens: "It is not every day that the world arranges itself in a poem." See Stevens, 191.

<sup>4</sup> By modern, I mean contemporary to Buson's own present moment in the late eighteenth century.

<sup>5</sup> In this article I use "sympathy" as defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "the quality or state of being affected by the condition of another with a feeling similar or corresponding to that of the other; the fact or capacity of entering into

or sharing the feelings of another or others; fellow-feeling.” *OED* quotes a line from English poet William Cowper’s (1731–1800) poem *The Task*: “There is in souls a sympathy with sounds, . . . . Some chord in unison with what we hear / Is touched within us, and the heart replies.”

- <sup>6</sup> Makoto Ueda writes: “[The poem] reads more like Western poetry, which was not to be introduced to Japan until the late nineteenth century.” See Makoto Ueda, *The Path of the Flowering Thorn: The Life and Poetry of Yosa Buson* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 20. Yamamoto Kenkichi has also observed that the poem was ahead of his time. See Yamamoto Kenkichi 山本健吉, *Yosa Buson 與謝蕪村* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1987), 231–238. Shimizu Takayaki calls it a “miracle” (*ichi kiseki* 一奇蹟) in Japanese literary history. See Shimizu Takayuki 清水孝之, ed., *Shinchō Nihon koten shūsei Yosa Buson shū* 新朝日本古典集成與謝蕪村集 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1979), 240.
- <sup>7</sup> Joseph T. Sorensen, *Optical Allusions: Screens, Paintings, and Poetry in Classical Japan (ca. 800–1200)* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).
- <sup>8</sup> John M. Rosenfield, *Mynah Birds and Flying Rocks: Word and Image in the Art of Yosa Buson* (Lawrence, Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, 2003), 21.
- <sup>9</sup> Rosenfield, 21.
- <sup>10</sup> Federico Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).
- <sup>11</sup> Timon Screech, *Obtaining Images: Art, Production and Display in Edo Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press), 316–342.
- <sup>12</sup> In her examination of Buson’s contemporary Ike no Taiga (1723–1776 池大雅) Melinda Takeuchi suggests that what was “true” (*shin* 真) for literati painters was the sincerity of heartfelt expression in painting, not necessarily the verisimilitude of representation. See Melinda Takeuchi, *Taiga’s True Views: The Language of Landscape Painting in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992). Screech seems to suggest that by the late eighteenth century *shin* eventually referred to both.
- <sup>13</sup> Marcon, 186.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 185–186.
- <sup>15</sup> Maki Fukuoka, *The Premise of Fidelity: Science, Visuality and Representing the Real in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012).
- <sup>16</sup> Masaoka Shiki 正岡子規, *Shiki zenshū* 子規全集 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1976), 17: 258–259.
- <sup>17</sup> Shinga and Buson were apparently quite close. Shinga’s son was friends with Buson, and Shinga treated Buson like a second son. See Ueda, 19.

- <sup>18</sup> The date of composition is a matter of debate. Ogata Tsutomu 尾形 侑 and Yamashita Kazumi 山下一海 speculate that Buson composed the poem in 1777, after the publication of his ballads “Denga no uta” 澱河歌 and “Shunpū batei kyoku” 春風馬堤曲. See Yosa Buson 与謝蕪村, *Buson zenshū* 蕪村全集 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1992) [hereafter *BZ*], 4: 26–83. Makoto Ueda suggests that the poem was written before 1777. Buson left his signature “Composed in reverence by the monk Buson” (*Shaku Buson hyakuhai sho* 釈蕪村百拜書), which Ueda claims Buson stopped using after 1757. See Ueda, 21.
- <sup>19</sup> H. Mack Horton, *The Rhetoric of Death and Discipleship in Premodern Japan: Sōchō’s Death of Sōgi and Kikaku’s Death of Master Bashō* (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2019), 27.
- <sup>20</sup> Beth M. Carter, “The Secret Mourning of an Evening Death: Genji’s Ritual, Practice, and Lament on Behalf of Yūgao,” *Japanese Language and Literature* 53.2 (October 2019): 155–174. For a list of other scholars on this topic, see Carter, 163–164.
- <sup>21</sup> “Buson shū” 蕪村集, in Muramatsu Tomotsugu 村松友次, ed., *Kanshō nihon no koten* 鑑賞日本古典, 18 vols. (Tokyo: Shōgaku tosho, 1981), 17: 50–69.
- <sup>22</sup> In Line 9 I use the word “Protean” (from Proteus in Greek mythology) as my translation for the word *hege* へげ (originally *henge* へんげ / 変化 but with an elided syllabic nasal). The word is both a noun and an adjective, referring to a being that transforms or the phenomena of that transformation. Eri Yasuhara, Makoto Ueda, and Cheryl Crowley have read *hege* as an adjective modifying *keburī* (smoke): “Mysterious smoke,” “Ghostly smoke,” and “Eerie smoke.” For a summary of the various ways Japanese scholars have interpreted the term, see Eri Fujita Yasuhara, “Buson and *Haishi*: A Study of Free-Form *Haishi* Poetry in Eighteenth Century Japan,” (Ph. D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1982), 113–118. My translation represents the word’s meaning as a noun and adjective by using “Protean,” which as a noun means “a person who or thing which changes form, character, nature, role,” and as an adjective, “adopting or existing in various shapes, variable in form” (*OED*). In 1927 James J. Montague used Protean as a noun, referring to wild animals as metaphors for commodities of exchange. See “Proteans of the Wild” in *Zanesville Signal* (November 10, 1927). Furthermore, considering the amount of supernatural literature published in Buson’s lifetime it makes sense to treat *hege* (or *henge*) as a noun referring to a creature that has the ability to change its shape. In kabuki, *henge* referred to *henge-buyō* 変化舞踊, or “transformation dance,” where a single actor performs different roles, genders, appearances, and gestures. Although this dance was most popular in the early nineteenth century, kabuki itself dates to the early seventeenth century. For this Edo definition of *henge*, see Maeda Isao 前田勇, ed. *Edogo daijiten* 江戸語大辞典 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1974), 906. With these meanings in mind, Buson’s use of *hege* encourages the

reader to think across aesthetic forms. In this vein, I use “Protean” as a metaphor for the way the poetic form of Buson’s elegy shifts into multiple modes and poetic genres.

- <sup>23</sup> I have left the onomatopoeia *hororo* untranslated because it is a sound that, I argue, reverberates in the form of Buson’s elegy. I also use the verb “to crow” for its assonance with *hororo*.
- <sup>24</sup> The Buddha in Line 16 refers to Amida Buddha, the central figure of Pure Land Buddhism. I omit “Amida” for the sake of rhythm and simplicity in the English translation.
- <sup>25</sup> Translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise. *BZ*, 4: 26–28.
- <sup>26</sup> Shimizu T., 240.
- <sup>27</sup> For more on *haishi*, see Yasuhara 1982.
- <sup>28</sup> Yasuhara: “my heart is torn in a thousand pieces.” Ueda: “my heart in thousands of fragments.” Crowley: “my heart is in a thousand shards.” See Yasuhara, 112; Ueda, 20; Crowley, 251.
- <sup>29</sup> The poem appears in Bashō’s *haikai* collection *Zoku Sarumino 続猿蓑* (1698; Sequel to the monkey’s straw coat). See *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikai 新日本古典文学大系* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1989) [hereafter *SNKBT*], 70: 491.
- <sup>30</sup> Ebara Taizō 頼原退蔵, *Haiku hyōshaku 俳句評釈* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1954), 1: 255.
- <sup>31</sup> The earliest example of *horohoro* as representing the sound of streaming tears can be traced to the tenth century. *Nihon kokugo daijiten 日本国語大辞典* lists the meanings of *horohoro* (all of which predate the Edo period) as follows: “the scattering or falling of leaves or blossoms,” “the heavy falling of water or tears,” “the dispersing of people,” “the tearing of cloth into pieces,” “the cry of birds like the pheasant” (also *hororo*), and “the pounding of a fulling-block.” See <http://japanknowledge.com/>, accessed October 29, 2021.
- <sup>32</sup> This is the only classical-sounding line in the poem, as the rest is in vernacular. Although the original does not provide a *kanji* for *haruka*, Ogata and Morita interpret its meaning through the Chinese graph *yō* 杳.
- <sup>33</sup> Muramatsu Tomotsugu and Shimizu Takayuki treat the subject of Lines 1 and 2 as separate. See Muramatsu, 50; Shimizu T., 241. In his English translation, Ueda makes the subject continue from the first line: “You left in the morning, and my heart in thousands of fragments / flies to an infinite distance this evening.” See Ueda, 120.
- <sup>34</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), 227.
- <sup>35</sup> Nieda Tadashi has speculated about the poem’s relationship to *koshi* (ancient-style poems) in the classical Chinese tradition. See Nieda Tadashi 仁枝忠,

- “Buson ‘Hokuju Rōsen o itamu’ to koshi” 蕪村「北寿老仙をいたむ」と古詩 in *Nihon bungaku kenkyū* 日本文学研究 2 (November 1962): 20–27.
- <sup>36</sup> For more on this kind of poetry in early China see Paul F. Rouzer, *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).
- <sup>37</sup> Gary Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry and The Politics of Death in Early Japan* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 84.
- <sup>38</sup> For slight variations of the story, see Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry and The Politics of Death in Early Japan*, 106–107.
- <sup>39</sup> Nam-lin Hur, *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, Anti-Christianity, and the Danka System* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Asia Center, 2007), 142.
- <sup>40</sup> Hur, 144.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.
- <sup>42</sup> Yiren Zheng, “Listening Askance with a Seventeenth-Century Chinese Acousmatic Voice,” *Parallax* 26.2 (October 2020): 163–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2020.1766750>
- <sup>43</sup> Edward Kamens, *Utamakura, Allusion, and Intertextuality in Traditional Japanese Poetry* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997).
- <sup>44</sup> Translated by Helen McCullough. See Helen McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985), 3.
- <sup>45</sup> This movement followed the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) literary movement Ancient Phraseology (*guwenci* 古文辭).
- <sup>46</sup> Poetry collections include *Tō Sō shijun* 唐宋詩醇 (Ch. Tang Song Shixun) from 1750. Han Yu’s writings collected in *Kan Ryū bun* 韓柳文 (Ch. Han Liu Wen) were reprinted in Japan and annotated by Ugai Sekisai 鶺鴒石齋 (1615–1664).
- <sup>47</sup> Narushima, 58–78.
- <sup>48</sup> Shimizu Shigeru 清水茂, ed., *Chūgoku shijin senshū* 中国詩人選集, 17 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1958), 11: 85.
- <sup>49</sup> Charles Hartman, “Literary and Visual Interactions in Lo Chih-ch’uan’s ‘Crows in Old Trees,’” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 28 (1993): 129–167.
- <sup>50</sup> Ueda has observed allusions to Qu Yuan in other Buson poetry. See Ueda, 121.
- <sup>51</sup> Trans. Edwin Cranston. See Edwin Cranston, *A Waka Anthology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 1: 106–107. For the Japanese, see *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shogakkan, 2002), 303.

- <sup>52</sup> According to *Shinpen Kokka taikan* 新編国歌大観, which compiles all poems from *Man'yōshū* and the twenty-one imperial anthologies, the verb *toyomu* (including its compounds) appears in less than 200 poems, approximately ten of which are from *Man'yōshū*. Poems that describe a pheasant call with *toyomu* are as follows: 13-3310, 19-4149, and 3-388. For 3-388, *tachi-toyomu* is an alternative reading of 立動, which is read as *tachi-sawagu* in *SNKBT* 3: 253. The verb *toyomu* (alone or in compound verbs) is used to describe the call of other birds in poems 6-1047, 6-1050/6-1062, 8-1474/8-1494, 10-1937, 9-1699, 15-3780, and 19-4166. See <http://japanknowledge.com>, accessed April 9, 2021.
- <sup>53</sup> Hagiwara Sakutarō 萩原朔太郎, *Kyōshū no shijin Yosa Buson* 郷愁の詩人と謝蕪村 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1988), 96–97.
- <sup>54</sup> Translated by Helen McCullough. See Helen McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985), 232. For the Japanese, see *SNKBT*, 5: 314.
- <sup>55</sup> The poem appears alongside other poems composed at Mt. Kōya and is anthologized in the section “expressing one’s feelings” (*jukkai* 述懐) in Bashō’s *hokku* collection *Arano* 荒野 (1789; Wasteland). For the Japanese see *SNKBT*, 70: 153.
- <sup>56</sup> For the Japanese see *Shūi wakashū* 拾遺和歌集 (1005, Collection of gleanings) in *SNKBT*, 7: 226. The poem is well known because it was anthologized in *Ogura hyakunin isshu* 小倉百人一首 (One hundred poems for one hundred people), compiled by Fujiwara Teika 藤原定家 (1162–1241).
- <sup>57</sup> Muramatsu, 17: 68–69.
- <sup>58</sup> For a discussion on Confucian friendship as a spousal relationship, see Li-Hsiang Lisa Rosenlee, “Confucian Friendship (*You* 友) as Spousal Relationship: A Feminist Imagination,” in *International Communication of Chinese Culture* 2 (November 2015): 181–203. Rosenlee’s article bridges the ancient (Confucian and Greek) idea of friendship as a perfect and moral fraternal bond with the modern ideal of perfect companionship in marriage. In Buson’s elegy, the cock and hen romance infused with fraternal love engages with Rosenlee’s argument from the opposite end, that is a homo-social friendship between a youth and an elder that is figured as a romance between a male and a female.
- <sup>59</sup> Hou-mei Sung, *Decoded Messages: The Symbolic Language of Chinese Animal Painting* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 81–90.
- <sup>60</sup> Benjamin A. Elman, “Sinophiles and Sinophobes in Tokugawa Japan: Politics, Classicism, and Medicine During the Eighteenth Century” *East Asian Science and Technology* 2.1 (2008): 93–121. <https://doi.org/10.1215/s12280-008-9042-9>
- <sup>61</sup> The image is public domain. See <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53237>.

- <sup>62</sup> Narushima Yukio 成島行雄, *Buson to kanshi* 蕪村と漢詩 (Tokyo: Kashinsha, 2001).
- <sup>63</sup> Fujita Shin'ichi 藤田真一, *Buson* 蕪村 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2000), 131.
- <sup>64</sup> Ling Hon Lam, *The Spatiality of Emotion in Early Modern China: From Dreamscape to Theatricality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 2.
- <sup>65</sup> Lam's argument about the spatiality of emotion in vernacular Chinese prose is interesting to read alongside Buson's ekphrastic experimentations in poetry.
- <sup>66</sup> Buson was associated with *bunjin* who cultivated an aesthetic attitude called *ki* 奇 (strangeness, eccentricity), the qualities of which include untrammelled expression, moral character, eccentric behavior, and artistic genius. See W. Puck Brecher, *The Aesthetics of Strangeness: Eccentricity and Madness in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 65–75. On his deathbed in 1783, Buson composed three verses, representing his imagination of a warbler (*uguisu*) from a painting of Wang Wei's villa. There is no convention that requires a poet at the moment of death to imagine a warbler, let alone one associated with Wang Wei. Buson was a painter and he loved Wang Wei.
- <sup>67</sup> *BZ*, 1: 483.
- <sup>68</sup> Before becoming the national bird of Japan in 1947, the green pheasant (a subspecies of the copper pheasant or common pheasant) was represented ubiquitously in Japanese art and literature. It was also a source of food and game for hunting.
- <sup>69</sup> See the facsimiles of the three *haiga* entitled “Kiji uchite” きじうちて (pheasant shot) in *BZ*, 6: 399, 449, 526.
- <sup>70</sup> *BZ*, 1: 275. For a larger image see *BZ*, 6: 399.
- <sup>71</sup> *Fuboku wakashō* 夫木和歌抄 (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1906) [hereafter *FW*], 124–126.
- <sup>72</sup> For a history of Musashino's representation in pre-modern texts see “The Grasses of Musashino” in David Spafford, *A Sense of Place: The Political Landscape in Late Medieval Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard East Asia Center, 2013), 30–73.
- <sup>73</sup> In *Man'yōshū*, Hitomaro lamented the death maiden from Izumo, and composed a poem in which he confuses the mist on the mountain for crematory smoke: “The girl from Izumo, / Where clouds emerge from the mountains, / Is she a wraith of mist? / In the mountains of Yoshino / The peaks are drifted over (*Yama no ma yu / Izumo no kora wa / Kiri nare ya / Yoshino no yama no / Mine ni tanabiku*).” Trans. Cranston. See Cranston, 1: 230.
- <sup>74</sup> *BZ*, 1: 229.

- <sup>75</sup> Shimizu T., 40. These clans are also known as the “Bandō hachi heishe” 坂東八平氏, samurai clans of the Taira lineage who rose to prominence in the *bandō* provinces (present day Kantō region), which bordered Musashino province.
- <sup>76</sup> For Japan, see Ebersole, *Ritual Poetry and The Politics of Death in Early Japan*. For China, see Anne Birrell, *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 189.
- <sup>77</sup> *FW*, 124–126.
- <sup>78</sup> A Buson *hokku* that represents *henge*: “Bestowed a house / Where a Protean resides / During winter slumber (*henge sumu / yashiki moraite / fuyugomori* 変化住屋敷もらひて冬籠).” See *BZ*, 1: 79.
- <sup>79</sup> See Peter Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony: Poetry, Empathy, and Community in Mid-Tokugawa Confucianism and Nativism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011).
- <sup>80</sup> While the terms “sympathy” and “empathy” have different meanings depending on the philosopher in the Anglo-European tradition, the phrase *mono no aware* can mean both. Thomas Harper, quoting Hino Tatsuo 日野龍夫 (1940–2003), defines *mono no aware* as it meant to Motoori Norinaga: “to empathize or sympathize with the feelings of others.” See Thomas Harper and Haruo Shirane, eds., *Reading The Tale of Genji: Sources From The First Millennium* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 415.
- <sup>81</sup> Motoori Norinaga, “*Genji monogatari tama no ogushi* [shō] 源氏物語玉の小櫛抄” (The tale of Genji: A jeweled comb [excerpt]), in Nakamura Yukihiro 中村幸彦, ed., *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* 日本古典文学大系 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1966) 94: 104–5.
- <sup>82</sup> For Norinaga the expression of emotion also means the communication of emotion. See Flueckiger, 177–79.
- <sup>83</sup> Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard East Asia Center, 1996), 50–51.
- <sup>84</sup> Many recordings of a male pheasant’s call can be found on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6H5nDgrrE&t=68s>
- <sup>85</sup> Ebersole, 55.
- <sup>86</sup> Hur, 409.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.
- <sup>88</sup> I thank the anonymous reviewer who encouraged me to clarify my use of the word “ritual.”
- <sup>89</sup> Culler, 162.
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.



- <sup>91</sup> Michael F. Marra, *The Poetics of Motoori Norinaga: A Hermeneutical Journey* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 188.
- <sup>92</sup> Branka Arsíc, *Bird Relics: Grief and Vitalism in Thoreau* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016), 58.
- <sup>93</sup> Here I am alluding to Allen Grossman's idea of the "virtual poem" in the work of Hart Crane, the imaginary or inactual poem that the actual poem carries inside it and to which it alludes. See Allen Grossman, "Hart Crane and Poetry: A Consideration of Crane's Intense Poetics with Reference to 'The Return'" *ELH* 48. 4 (1981): 841–879. The actual language in Buson's elegy regulates access to virtual language through the rhythm and repetition in its form.
- <sup>94</sup> Kobayashi Kei'ichirō 小林計一郎, et al., eds., *Issa zenshū* 一茶全集 (Nagano-shi: Shinano mainichi shinbunsha, 1979), 1: 148.
- <sup>95</sup> Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石, *Sōseki zenshū* 漱石全集 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2003), 17: 126.
- <sup>96</sup> Arsíc, 23.